1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
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is strictly taboo. This taboo is kept up for three months, and to mark its conclusion all the lads must go to the farm of the priest and do one day's work. The priest then gives permission to the lads to speak to women, reminding them of the consequence of revealing the common secret. The women prepare a feast and pray the boys that they may once again hear them speak. It is clear that these rites symbolize a process of death and rebirth. The three months' silence is a portrayal of the early years of children who have not yet learned to speak. They are a precaution also against the revelation of the mysteries to women. Anyone subsequently blurting out the truth was taken to the *Ku* house and tried. If he was proved guilty, his father took ashes and rubbed them on the boy's head (the symbol of mourning). The boy was then impaled on a sharpened stake, all the initiates outside dancing and singing to drown the screams of the victim. The women were told that the *Ku* had swallowed the boy.

These inhuman practices cannot, of course, be carried out nowadays. The imposition of fines in lieu of capital punishment is apparently insufficient to maintain the secrecy of the rites; otherwise the above details would not have been obtained.

We have seen that the *obwai* rites are of considerable social importance, and to the uninitiated involve also the religious belief that the dead are in close association with the living. But these religious beliefs are shattered at initiation, for the boys learn for the first time that the dead do not assemble in the *obwai* house, and that the mysterious voice of the *obwai* is produced by a purely mechanical process. In spite of this, the initiates do not apparently regard the whole thing as a fraud; for a part only of the mysteries is revealed and the initiates still continue to believe that the *Agwam obwai* is in some vague way a go-between between the living and the dead. It is right, therefore, that the punishment of social offences, whether committed by the initiated or uninitiated, should be in the hands of the *Agwam obwai*.

Rain-making.—It would appear that the rain-making rites also are intimately associated with the ancestors. Each kindred has its rain-maker, and though he may perform the rites on some sacred stone or other material object and address his prayers to the Lord of Heaven (Gwaza), at the back of his mind

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769 he is addressing his dead forefathers. And if his prayers for rain are granted it is to the grave of his most remote ancestor
●789 that he retires in order to offer thanks. There are many rain-makers among the Katab, but the rain-maker par excellence is one of the Shokwa family, the Teowap. The Shokwa sprang from the River Kaduna, and it is appropriate that they should be responsible for water supplies. Just before the rains are due the Teowap takes his flask of beer, prepared from offerings of corn given by all the heads of households, and goes to the sacred stream. With prayers for a successful farming year he ladles out quantities of the beer on the water and on certain trees in the vicinity. No one may begin planting until the Teowap, or Magajin Dodo as he is also called, has first set the example. In October also he reaps his small plot of digitaria millet, and offers a porridge of the first-fruits, throwing some into the river and smearing the trees. No one may use new corn until these rites have been performed. Each householder repeats the first-fruit rites in his compound, making porridge of digitaria with which he smears the lintel of the door.

On the occurrence of drought rites are also performed. The Teowap goes to the banks of the Kaduna, to the very spot from which his ancestors sprang, sprinkling beer and beniseed to the four corners of the compass and at the base of certain trees. He then says: "Gwaza, our children are dying; grant us rain that our crops may survive and that we may eat the fruit thereof and live."

769 In March, just before the first rains are due, the Teowap sends his sons to the Kaduna with beer and instructions to offer
226 the beer to the spirits of the river for a plentiful supply of rain during the agricultural season and for a successful fishing drive. They address the spirits, saying, "The priest of Shokwa has sent us to perform the rites performed by our forefathers. Grant that we may have rain sufficient for our crops and that those who fish here on the morrow may be successful in catching those fish which it is permissible to catch; those that may not be taken do thou place on one side." Beer is then sprinkled on the water. Next morning the priest arrives himself, and, finding that the rites have been correctly carried out, gives permission for the fishing to begin. The first to enter the water is one of the priest's sons, and then all join in the drive. The first man

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of each village to catch a fish, however small, must hand it over to the priest, who has the fishes cooked and eats them ceremonially with his sons.

Among the Kaje the rain-making rites are also in the hands of a particular family. Material objects used are a monolith set in a grove (into which no one may enter with an axe), and a bamboo branch which has been used for measuring corpses before making a grave. In time of drought the people come to the head of this family and inquire if the drought is due to his negligence. So he takes the bamboo to the grove, and striking the monolith, says: "This custom I have received from my fathers and forefathers. May the Lord of the Heavens (Gwaza) grant that we may be blessed with rain. Let not the people die of hunger. They cling to me and say that I have hindered the rains. May Gwaza grant that the custom of my forefathers may not appear to be a worthless thing, and that I may be saved from the abuse of my kindred." This appeal is apparently addressed to the ghosts of dead ancestors, for, if rain follows, the priest immediately goes to the graves of the most remote ancestor and there offers thanks. There are also rites to prevent excessive rains while the corn is in the ear. To guard against this the rain-priest plants early a patch of digitaria, and with the new corn he makes a porridge and smears it on the monolith with the supplication that the crops may not be injured by an excess of rain.

Head-hunting.—The Katab, like all his neighbours, was a head-hunter, if by that term is meant the practice of severing the heads of enemies slain in battle and carrying them home in triumph to be deposited in the house of skulls. When he had killed his enemy he cut off his head, put it in his bag, and made off at full speed. And when he was free from pursuit one of his friends made him drink immediately a concoction of the bark of the locust and male shea trees, at the same time striking him on the chest and back with locust-bean leaves. These rites were designed to protect the warrior from assault by the dead man's ghost. A companion or relative[1] was then given charge of the head, for the slayer had to avoid all contact with his trophy. The friend passed a twig of the prosopis oblonga tree

[1] One had to exercise discretion in choosing the person to whom one gave the head, or he might claim it as his own.

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when the deceased *gado* is said to return to the *abwai* hut: beer drinking and dancing take place on alternate days; every spirit voice is heard, and two masked dancers, also described by Reynolds as "dodone," both mute, appear—one, *kusak* (Hausa, *kajinjiri*), who dances with the women of the community, and the other, *daniet*, who parades about at night in a ponderous leaf-covered frame of bamboo. During this entire period, male clothing is restricted to a plaited raphia penis-sheath. Though it has been suggested that neck-cords or *tswandik* are intended to remind women of their marital obligations, and serve to restrain them from contracting new secondary marriages, and though, as has been noted, sexual relations between a man and his brothers' wives is a ritual offence, Reynolds is still of the opinion that *aswa* is a period of sexual licence in the community. At the end of the period of celebration, each wife in the village gives the gathering of cult members a final pot of beer, around the neck of which her *tswandik* is fastened.[122]

769 794 [291] [786]

Religious Beliefs and Practices

The general character of indigenous Kaje religion will be apparent in the above account of rituals and other practices associated with the life cycle. Few additional details are available, and these add little to the picture. 789

When the rains are overdue, the elders of the clan or tribal section meet at the local "rain 'tsafi' place," where the *atiyinhwap* performs a rain-making rite. Failure of this rite in past times brought a league of *atiyinhwap* of Banewhan, Batadon, and Baimbin to "inform" the *atiyinhwap* of Baiduan, who would perform similar rites on behalf of the whole tribe. For a number of years, however, only the *atiyinhwap* of Baimbin has persisted in carrying out these rites.

Acha-sowing rites, too, have fallen into disuse, apparently, except among Baimbin. If a trial sowing of mixed seed of the *atiyinhwap* sprouts satisfactorily, general sowing commences immediately; if not, *atiyinhwap* solicits offerings, presides over a feast of elders, and finally prays over the ground. 241

Acha harvest rites, however, are still commonly practised throughout Kaje, according to Reynolds. These begin much like the rain rites, with the *atiyinhwap* spreading acha paste on the stone at the "rain-shrine": from the rain-shrine, however, he retires to his compound, where he applies paste to the huts, to the floor and walls of his own hut, and finally to his bed. Similar rites are performed in every compound early the next morning, when the compound head selects "a sensible youth who would first spread the paste on an old hoe and then on the grave of his grandfather." Thereafter, huts and cornbins are treated, the nearest cross-roads, and the waterhole; and the head of the compound is given paste to eat, and calls on God and his ancestors to bless them. The youth then eats some of the paste and divides the remainder between members of the compound. Only when these rites are performed can the new acha be used in the regular way as food.

The sanctions against murder, violence between groups or even within the minimal lineage and incest, are traditionally of a supernatural sort, and such crimes might be expunged by ritual purifications: for example, a murderer was expelled to Kagoma, where he served the senior ritual head there as a slave, in effect, for a year; he then retired to Kurmin Bi, where the senior Kaje *atiyinhwap* performed a rite readmitting him to the general Kaje community; he then underwent further rituals in his own village.[123] 681 783

Theft and protracted debt were punished by fines; but the offended and offender were alike subject to oaths and ordeals credited with supernatural sanctions: these were administered by the priests and some are done still. 681 695

[122] On the basis of available materials it is impossible to comment on the apparent discrepancy between Meek's and Reynolds' accounts: Meek understood that this or a nearly identical celebration was recurrent at two- or three-year intervals; cf. Katab, farther above.

[123] Rape and adultery appear to have been left up to the offended party to deal with: the death of the offender ended the matter.